



FRAN

BY
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woman is smiling. Dismiss your secretary.

SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton, Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs further in search of him, laughs during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of the school, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and is seen by Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Fran's mother. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. Gregory explains that Fran is the daughter of a very dear friend who is dead. Fran agrees to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her room. It is decided that Fran must go to school. Grace shows persistent interest in Gregory's story of his dead friend and hints that Fran may be an impostor. Fran declares that the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home, but Mrs. Gregory remains staunch in her friendship. Fran is ordered before Superintendent Ashton to be punished for insubordination in school. Chairman Clinton is present. The affair ends in Fran leaving the school in company of the men to the amusement of the school mangers of the town. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tired of circus life and sought a home. Grace tells of seeing Fran come home after midnight with a man. She guesses part of the story and surprises the rest from Abbott. She decides to ask Bob Clinton to go to Springfield to investigate Fran's story. Fran enlists Abbott in her battle against Grace.

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

"I don't understand how you mean that. I know Mr. Gregory's work would be seriously crippled. And it would be a great blow to Walnut Street church—she's always there."

"Still, you see she can't stay."

"No, I don't see. You and Miss Grace must be reconciled."

"Oh, Abbott, can't you understand, or is it that you just won't? It isn't on my account that Miss Noir must leave this house. She's going to bring trouble—she's already done it. I've had lots of experience, and when I see people hurrying down hill, I expect to find them at the bottom, not because it's in the people, but because it's in the direction. I believe some mighty good-intentioned men are stumbling down hill, carrying their religion right into hell."

"Hush, little friend! You don't understand what religion is."

"If I can't find out from its fruits, I don't want to know."

"Of course. But consider how Miss Grace's labors are blessing the helpless."

"Abbott, unless the fruits of religion are flavored by love, they're no more account than apples taken with



Grace Looked Down Upon Mrs. Gregory as If Turned to Stone.

bitter-rot—not worth fifty cents a barrel."

Abbott asked slyly, "What about your fruit, out there in the world?"

"Oh, Fran confessed, with a gleam, "we're not in the orchard-business at all, out here."

Abbott laid his hand earnestly upon her arm. "Fran! Come in and help us spray."

"You dear old prosy, preachy professor!" she exclaimed affectionately. "I have been thinking of it. I've half a mind to try, really. Wouldn't Grace

Noir just die? . . . O Lord, there she comes now!"

Fran left the disconsolate young man in wild precipitation, and flew into the house. He turned off in another direction, and Gregory and Grace came slowly toward the house, having, without much difficulty, eliminated Simon Jefferson from their company. In truth, Simon, rather than be improved by their conversation, had dived down a back alley, and found entrance through the side door. When Hamilton Gregory and his secretary came into the reception hall, the old bachelor lay upon a divan thinking of his weak heart—Fran's flight from the choir loft had reminded him of it—and Mrs. Jefferson was fanning him, as if he were never to be a grown man. Mrs. Gregory sat near the group, silently embroidering in white silk. Fran had hastily thrown herself upon the stairway, and with half-closed eyes, looked as if she had been there a long time.

"Fran," said Mrs. Gregory coldly, "you left the choir practice before we were two-thirds done. Of course I could hardly expect you—he looked at his wife—to stay, although your presence would certainly have kept Fran there; and it does look as if we should be willing to resort to any expedient to keep her there!"

"How would a lock and chain do?" Fran inquired meekly.

"I don't think she came straight home, either," remarked Grace Noir significantly. "Did you, Fran?"

"Miss Noir," said Fran, smiling at her through the banister-slats, "you are so satisfactory, you always say just about what I expect. Yes, I came straight home. I'm glad it's your business, so you could ask."

Hamilton Gregory turned to his wife again, with restraint more marked. "Next Sunday is roll-call day, Mrs. Gregory. The board has decided to revise the lists. We've been carrying so many names that it's a burden to the church. The world reproaches us, saying, 'Isn't so-and-so a member? He never attends, does he?' I do hope you will go next Sunday!"

Mrs. Gregory looked down at her work thoughtfully, then said, "Mother would be left—"

"It's just this way," her husband interposed abruptly. "If no excuses, such as sickness, are sent, and if the people haven't been coming for months, and don't intend coming, we are simply determined to drop the names—strike 'em out. We believe church members should show where they stand. And—if you—"

Mrs. Gregory looked up quietly. Her voice seemed woven of the silk threads she was stitching in the white pattern. "If I am not a member of the church, sitting an hour in the building couldn't make me one."

Simon Jefferson cried out, "Is that my sister Lucy? Blessed if I thought she had so much spirit!"

"Do you call that spirit?" returned Gregory, with displeasure.

"Well," snorted Simon, "what do you call it, then?"

"Perhaps," responded Gregory, with marked disapprobation, "perhaps it was spirit."

Grace, still attired for the street, looked down upon Mrs. Gregory as if turned to stone. Her beautiful face expressed something like a horror at the other's irreverence.

Fran shook back her hair, and watched with gleaming eyes from behind the slats, not unlike a small wild creature peering from its cage.

"Oh," cried Fran, "Miss Noir feels so bad!"

Grace swept from the hall, her rounded figure instinct with the sufferings of a martyr.

Fran murmured, "That killed her!"

"And you!" cried Gregory, turning suddenly in blind anger upon the other—"you don't care whose heart you break!"

"I haven't any power over hearts," retorted Fran, gripping her fingers till her hands were little white balls. "Oh, if I only had! I'd get at 'em if I could—like this . . ."

She leaped to her feet.

"Am I always to be defied by you?" she exclaimed; "is there to be no end to it? But suppose I put an end to

it, myself—tell you that this is no place for you—"

"You shall never say that!" Mrs. Gregory spoke up, distinctly, but not in his loud tones. She dropped her work in some agitation, and drew Fran to her heart. "I have a friend here. Hamilton—one friend—and she must stay."

"Don't be uneasy, dear one," Fran looked up lovingly into the frightened face. "He won't tell me to go. He won't put an end to it. He won't tell me anything!"

"Listen to me, Lucy," said Gregory, his tone altering, "yes, she must stay—that's settled—she must stay. Of course. But you—why will you refuse what I ask, when for years you were one of the most faithful attendants at the Walnut Street church? I am asking you to go next Sunday because—well, you know how people judge by appearances. I'm not asking it



"I Want to Be Your Secretary."

for my sake—of course I know your real character—but go for Miss Grace's sake—go to show her where you stand."

"How is it about church attendance, anyway?" asked Fran, with the air of one who seeks after knowledge. "I thought you went to church for the Lord's sake, and not for Miss Noir's."

"I have given you my answer, Mr. Gregory," said his wife faintly, "but I am sorry that it would make me seem obstinate—"

He uttered a groan, and left the hall in despair. His gesture said that he must give it up.

Mrs. Gregory folded her work, her face pale and drawn, her lips tremulous. She looked at Fran and tried to smile. "We must go to rest now," she said—"if we can."

CHAPTER XIV.

Fighting for Her Life.

The next day found Fran the bluest of the blue. No laughing now, as she sat alone, half-way up the ladder leading to Gregory's barn-loft. She meant to be just as miserable as she pleased, since there was no observer to be deceived by sowing cheat-seed of merriment.

"The battle's on now, to a finish," muttered Fran despondently, "yet here I sit, and here I scrooch." Fran's thoughts were at the abysmal stage of discouragement. For a time, there seemed in her heart not the tiniest taper alight, and in this blackness, both hope and failure were alike indistinguishable.

"But we'll see," she cried, at last coming down the ladder, "we'll see!" and she clenched her fists, flung open the barn-door and marched upon the house with battle in her eyes. Gliding up her loins—that is, smoothing her hair—and sharpening her weapons for instant use, she opened the library door.

She knew Grace Noir had gone to the city with Robert Clinton, and yet her feeling on seeing Hamilton Gregory alone, was akin to surprise. How queerly lonesome he looked, without his secretary! She found the philanthropist immersed in day-dreams. The thought of the good his money and influence were accomplishing

thrilled his soul, while through the refined ether of this pious joy appeared the loveliness of Grace Noir, lending something like spiritual sensuousness to his vision of duty.

He did not want the applause of the general public any more than he wanted his past unearthing. It was enough if his philanthropy was known to God and Grace Noir. She stood, to his mind, as a symbol of religion—there can be no harm in reverencing symbols.

Fran's eyes drew him abruptly from his reverie.

"Fran," he said, as if she had appeared in answer to a summons, "I am unhappy about you. Your determination to have nothing to do with the church not only distresses but embarrasses me. You have insisted on coming into my life. Then why do you disgrace it? You pretend that you want to be liked by us, yet you play cards with strangers at night—it's outrageous. You even threw a card in my yard where a card was never seen before."

"Do you think cards are so very wicked?" asked Fran, looking at him curiously.

"You know what I think. I look on gambling as immoral. But it ought to be enough for me simply to forbid it."

She closed the door, and placed her back against it. She looked him in the eyes, and said abruptly—

"I want to be your secretary."

Hamilton gripped his chair. "I have a secretary," he retorted, looking at her resentfully. He checked words he would have liked to utter, on reflecting that his secret was in Fran's keeping. How Grace would shrink from him, if she knew the truth—how that magnificent figure would turn its back upon him—and those scornful, imperious, never-faltering eyes.

Fran drew nearer. She seated herself upon the arm of a chair, one foot on the floor, and spoke with restrained intensity: "I'm well enough educated. I can take dictation and make good copy."

He allowed his tone to sound defiance—"I already have a secretary."

Fran continued with an effort, "Mother didn't like studying, very well, but she was determined to get me out of the condition I was born in; she taught me all she knew. Wasn't she splendid? So patient—Fran paused, and stared straight before her, straight into the memory of her mother's eyes. Gregory reflected—"If this child had not come, had not intruded herself upon my life! Haven't I suffered enough for my follies?"

"When mother died," Fran resumed, "she thought maybe Uncle Ephraim had mellowed, so I went to him, because I thought I couldn't get along without love." She shook her head, with a pathetic little smile. "But I could! Uncle Ephraim didn't mellow, he dried up. He blamed me for being born—I think, myself, it was a mistake. He turned me out, but I was so tough I just couldn't be winter-killed. After that I went back to the show and stocked up in experience. I mention it to point out that a mild job like being your private secretary wouldn't strain a muscle."

Gregory's voice cut across hers. "My secretary must be in sympathy with my work. To exercise such talents as I have, in my religion, and I need a helper whose eyes are fixed upon the higher life. This is final, and the subject must never be reopened. I find it very painful."

Fran's discovery that he had not heard her plea, crimsoned her face. She jumped from the arm-chair, breathing rapidly. "Then," she cried, "if you won't have me, get another. The one you have must go."

"She shall do nothing of the sort," he coldly responded.

"Yes," Fran retorted violently, "I tell you she must go!"

He struck the table with his palm.

"Never!"

"Shall I use my last resource?" Fran's eyes gleamed ominously.

The hand upon the table became a fist. That was his only reply.

"I would entreat you," said Fran, faltering, "and with tears—but what good would it do? None. There's no use for one woman to weep if another

down!" then, rushing from the throne, fell prostrate on the floor.

There he lay during the long-continued effervescence of the compound, spurring like ten thousand pennyworth of pop, and believing himself in the agonies of death—a melancholy and humiliating proof that kings are mortal.

He took the coat.

Chester Thomas, colored, was being tried before Judge Ambler on the charge of stealing an overcoat. He began:

"I was walking down Chapin street when a man I never saw before comes up and says, 'Here, feller, is a good overcoat.' I taken the coat from him."

Judge Ambler interrupted, saying:

"Thomas, you do not think I am going to believe any such tale as that? If you had pleaded guilty and made an honest statement I might have been considerate."

Thomas shouted:

"If that's the case, Judge, I took the coat."

He was paroled.—Baltimore is patch to New York World.

"I Am Going to Appeal to Your Better Nature."

"I am so lonely, so lonely!" she murmured plaintively, "so very lonely! There seems a reason for everybody but me—I can't be explained. That's why I am disliked. If there could be one heart for me to claim—whose heart should it be? Does no sort of feeling tell you whose heart it should be?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Soil Fertilizers Pay

Increase of Population and Scarcity of Land
Make an Increased Acre Yield a Necessity.

By C. A. LeClair, Instructor in Agronomy, University of Missouri, Columbia

In answer to the question "Do commercial fertilizers pay in Missouri?" it is necessary to look squarely into existing conditions. Missouri is a large state and its soils are of various composition, not only because of their origin but because those formed from the same material, in the same way, have been handled differently. It is a known fact that continued cropping of a soil will at least greatly reduce the easily soluble plant food; if this food is not returned productive efficiency is reduced. The history of agriculture in the old world, especially in China, has emphasized this truth.

Most soils which are physically fit for the plow contain in their virgin state sufficient of the essential plant food elements, nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, etc., in an available form to supply the needs of several crops. Just how long a soil will continue to

Field fertilization is by far the easiest and most reliable method and one that every farmer can carry out. In short, it consists of laying out a series of plots on the land in question, applying nitrogen to one, phosphorus to another and probably potash to a third, leaving, of course, one or more plots untreated as checks. If circum-



Where nitrogen, phosphorus and potash were all necessary in available form to bring maximum yield.

stances permit, combinations of the above treatments may be tried. After determining the limiting factors to best production, a cheap means of remedy is of next importance.

Should nitrogen be deficient, the most effective and best means of restoration is by use of legume crops fed or turned under. Where phosphorus is the limiting factor, 150 pounds of steamed bone meal or acid phosphate drilled with wheat brings a big return from this money crop, besides giving a luxuriant growth to the following grass crop.

Potash is rarely lacking in sufficient quantities in Missouri soils to warrant much attention, but in some cases the application of sulphate of potash or muriate of potash with the phosphate will bring remunerative returns. A 3-10-4 fertilizer also may be applied with good results.

In general, then, where proper precaution is practiced to apply only such reinforcements as the soil needs, together with proper rotation of crops and maintenance of organic matter, commercial fertilizers will seldom fail to bring a good net return on the money invested.

Up until this time intensive culture has hardly been a paying proposition here, but with new lands no longer available and with population increasing more rapidly than produc-

tion, the necessity of increasing the yield of the land is becoming more and more necessary. It is, then, helpful to know what, if any, of the essential elements are deficient.

There are four methods in common use by which the defects of a particular soil can be roughly estimated. These are by direct determination of the total supply of the essential elements, which can rarely be interpreted in more than a general way; by a study of the natural vegetation; by pot fertilizer tests; and, lastly, by field fertilizer tests.

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